

Jerusalem Perspective

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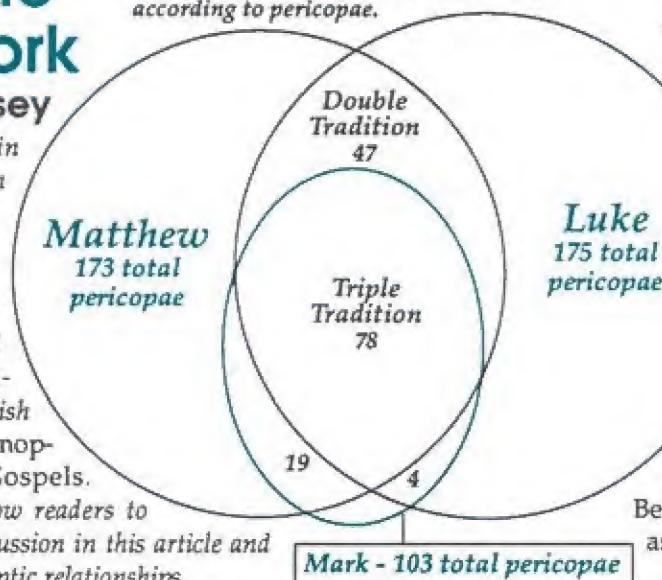
The Synoptic Problem

Laying the Groundwork

by Robert L. Lindsey

This is the fourth article in Dr. Lindsey's introduction to the field of synoptic studies and the "synoptic problem." We strongly recommend that readers obtain Gospel Parallels, published by Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN. This is an English version of Albert Huck's Synopsis of the First Three Gospels. Gospel Parallels will allow readers to more readily follow the discussion in this article and in future articles about synoptic relationships.

Inter-relationship of the synoptic Gospels according to pericopae.



Luke stated in the prologue to his Gospel that many written accounts of Jesus' life were in circulation. Did Matthew, Mark or Luke make use of these accounts in writing their works? Did they make use of each other's accounts? Assuming that the synoptic Gospels derive from an earlier version or versions of the biography of Jesus, the synoptic problem must be solved if one wishes to arrive at a more original text of that biography. Before dealing with the various aspects of the synoptic problem in (Continued on page 2)

John the Nazirite

by Shmuel Safrai

This is the third of a series of articles examining the Lukan account of John the Baptist and Jesus in the light of Jewish literature.

...he [John the Baptist] will be great before the LORD and he may not drink wine or strong drink.... (Luke 1:15)

The prohibition against drinking intoxicants is one of the hallmarks of the nazirite as recorded in the Torah and rabbinic tradition. According to Numbers 6, a nazirite must abstain from everything that is obtained from the

grapevine: he may not drink wine, wine vinegar or grape juice, he may not eat grapes fresh or dried, or even the seeds or skins of grapes. He also is not allowed to cut his hair or come in contact with a corpse during his entire term as a nazirite.

The Mishnah seems to indicate that the vow to abstain even from specific parts of the grape implies acceptance of the entire nazirite regimen. According to Nazir 1:2, even if one vows: "I will abstain from eating grape seeds and grape skins ... he becomes a nazirite."

Second Temple Period

Rabbinic literature indicates that the taking of nazirite vows was rather common at the end of the Second Temple period. Thus, for ex-

ample, the Jerusalem Talmud Bera-chot 11^b mentions three hundred nazirites during the time of Shim'on ben Shetah, a sage who lived during the reigns of Alexander Jannai (103-76 B.C.E.) and his wife Salome (76-67 B.C.E.) who succeeded him. Mishnah Nazir 3:6 states that Helene, the queen of Adiabene who converted to Judaism, became a nazirite when her son went off to war. Tosefta Nazir 4:10 speaks of a certain woman in Jerusalem called Miriam of Tadmor who brought the prescribed sacrifices upon the completion of her term as a nazirite.

Acts 21:24 mentions that Paul was asked by James to pay for the sacrifices of four nazirites "so that

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The Synoptic Problem (continued from page 1)

detail, we must lay the groundwork by introducing some basic concepts and terminology.

Synopsis

This term is used to refer to a book in which the first three Gospels are arranged in parallel columns. The stories of each Gospel are printed in the order in which they appear in that Gospel, with parallels when they exist from the other two Gospels.

Synoptic Problem

The so-called synoptic problem relates to the order in which Matthew, Mark and Luke were written, and the literary sources used by each.

Each of the synoptic Gospels not only have certain sections not found in the other two, but their narratives overlap at various points in content, structure, vocabulary and word order. In some places one writer seems to have exerted a direct or indirect influence upon one or both of the others, while at other points the writers seem to have been drawing upon one or more non-canonical sources.

This is a complex problem, and generations of New Testament scholars have grappled with it with-

out reaching a satisfactory and universally agreed upon solution.

Pericope

A *pericope* (plural: *pericopae*) is the technical term for a story unit. Huck, in his *Synopsis of the First*

Luke. This term refers specifically to the Matthean-Lukan double tradition story units, although there also are nineteen *pericopae* shared only by Matthew and Mark and four *pericopae* shared only by Luke and Mark.

Synoptic Statistics

•225 total *pericopae*

- Luke: 175 pericopae, 19,448 words.*
- Matthew: 173 pericopae, 18,298 words.*
- Mark: 103 pericopae, 11,078 words.*
- Matthew and Luke share 125 pericopae, 47 of which have no parallel in Mark.*
- Mark and Matthew share 97 pericopae, 19 of which have no parallel in Luke.*
- Mark and Luke share 82 pericopae, 4 of which have no parallel in Matthew.*
- Total pericopae found in more than one of the Gospels: 148.*
- Total pericopae only found in one of the three Gospels: 77.*
- 59 of the 78 Triple Tradition pericopae are in the same order in all three Gospels.*
- Only 1 of the 47 Matthean-Lukan Double Tradition pericopae is placed in the same order by both writers.*

Three Gospels, divides the synoptic Gospels into 225 *pericopae*. Often a *pericope* does not comprise a whole story, but only an isolated saying or short summary.

Verbal Agreement

Use of the same words, sometimes implying the same forms or sequence of words.

Structural Agreement

Uniformity of story order, the appearance of *pericopae* in the same order in two or more of the synoptic Gospels.

Triple Tradition

The seventy-eight *pericopae* which are all found in Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Double Tradition

The forty-seven *pericopae* that are found only in Matthew and

Triple Order

The order which is shared by fifty-nine of the Triple Tradition *pericopae*.

Minor Agreements

The 400 or so instances within the *pericopae* of the Triple Tradition where Matthew and Luke exhibit verbal agreement not shared by Mark. Matthew and Luke rarely agree with each other verbally at length in Triple Tradition, and these minor agreements consist in the addition of only a word or short phrase which is not found in Mark's parallel passage.

Most scholars recognize only these 400 minor agreements of addition. However, Matthew and Luke agree in other minor ways against Mark. Approximately 140

times they agree against Luke in the form of a word, some 140 times in giving a synonym (e.g., "the devil" against Mark's "Satan," "Herod the tetrarch" against Mark's "King Herod"), and about seventy times in inverting the order of words.

One also could include as minor agreements several hundred instances where Matthew and Luke agree to omit material found in Mark in parallel passages. For instance, both Matthew and Luke omit the word "twice" opposite Mark 14:30. What did Jesus originally say? Did he say that Peter would deny him three times before the rooster crowed *twice*, as Mark records, or that Peter would deny him three times before the rooster crowed *once*, as Matthew and Luke record (Mt. 26:34; Lk. 22:34)?

In next month's article, Dr. Lindsey will analyze the meaning of some of the synoptic statistics presented in this article.

Jerusalem Perspective

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Yis-ra·³EL appears 2512 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. In Israel's early history, a member of the nation was referred to as a "Hebrew" — Abraham is called a Hebrew in Genesis 14:13, and Jonah identifies himself as a Hebrew in Jonah 1:9. In Genesis 40:15, Joseph tells Pharaoh's chief cupbearer, "I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews."

Later, one who belonged to the people of Israel called himself an Israelite (yis-re·³e-LI). After the Assyrian exile, when the remnants of the people were centered in Judah, the name Jew (ye-hu-DI) became a synonym for Hebrew and Israelite (Jeremiah 34:9). In the first century non-Jews, whether speaking or writing in Greek, Latin or Aramaic, used the term "Jew" to refer to an Israelite. However, "Israel" (yis-ra·³EL) was how Hebrew-speaking Jews referred to themselves.

Range of Meaning

Throughout history the name yis-ra·³EL has had many different meanings:

Jacob

"Israel" was the name which Jacob received after his struggle with a supernatural being. Jacob's new name was a medal of honor and contained within it the story of his success in facing God's challenge.

Hebrew Nuggets

yis-ra·³EL is a compound of two Hebrew words: the verb שָׁרָה (sa-RI-ta), based on the Hebrew root שָׁרָה meaning "struggle" or "persevere;" and אֵל (el), an abbreviated form of

Lesson Nineteen Israel — יִשְׂרָאֵל

In Lessons Twelve-Fourteen we learned the word מְנוּרָה (me-no-RAH, a lampstand), and we mentioned that a representation of the menorah is at the center of the emblem of the State of Israel. In this lesson we will learn the Hebrew name for that state — יִשְׂרָאֵל (yis-ra·³EL, Israel).

אֱלֹהִים (e-lo-HIM, God). This explains the statement in Genesis 32:28: "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל - אֵל - שָׁרָה), for you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."

Jacob's descendants

"Israel" became the name of the whole nation. The descendants of Jacob's twelve sons came to be known as "the people of the sons of Israel" (Exodus 1:9).

The ten northern tribes

When the northern tribes seceded during the reign of Rehoboam, "Israel" became the name of the people of the northern kingdom in contrast to "Judah," the name of the people of the southern kingdom (Jeremiah 23:6;

Amos 2:4,6).

Neither priest nor Levite

"Israel" also was used in Jesus' day to refer to a Jew who was not of priestly or Levitical lineage: "If a priest or a Levite leased a field from yis-ra·³EL [in other words, from an ordinary Israelite]..." (Demai 6:3).

An individual Jew

As noted above, in the time of Jesus yis-ra·³EL was how Hebrew-speaking Jews referred to themselves. It is interesting that during this period yis-ra·³EL not only was a collective noun, but also could refer to just one person.

The Jewish state

When the Jewish state was established in 1948, "Israel" was chosen as its official name. The name "Israel" once again took on national, although not exclusively Jewish, connotations: a citizen of Israel is an "Israeli" whether he is by religion a Jew, Moslem, Christian or a member of another religion.

Next month we will continue our study of יִשְׂרָאֵל, and present a new Hebrew vowel.

Judaism and the Origins of Christianity

A new book by David Flusser, Hebrew University professor and co-founder of the Jerusalem School, has just been published. *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* is a collection of forty-one articles, thirteen of which appear in this work for the first time.

This 725-page book was prepared under the editorship of another Jerusalem School member, Dr. Bradford Young, who collaborated with Flusser in the writing of one of the articles, "Messianic Blessings in Jewish and Christian Texts." Flusser also collaborated on two other articles with his fellow Jerusalem School scholar and Hebrew University professor, Shmuel Safrai.

Of particular interest to Christian readers will be the articles: "The Magnificat, the Benedictus and the War

Scroll," "The Last Supper and the Essenes," "Melchizedek and the Son of Man," "Hillel's Self-Awareness and Jesus," "The Crucified One and the Jews" and "Jesus and the Sign of the Son of Man."

Special Offer

Judaism and the Origins of Christianity is published by Magnes Press, the publishing house of the Hebrew University. The price of the book is US\$73.00 (including postage from Israel by surface mail). Magnes Press is making a special offer to readers of JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE — only US\$54.00. Your order should be mailed to JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE, P.O. Box 31820, Jerusalem, 91317 Israel — however checks should be made out to "Magnes Press." JP

Thank You Int'l Synoptic Society Members

We wish to thank those readers of JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE who have become members of the International Synoptic Society. Your membership dues are promoting the research of the Jerusalem School and will help to expand the PERSPECTIVE. In the next few months we intend to move to an eight- or twelve-page format. By increasing circulation, we hope to keep the same subscription price for the expanded PERSPECTIVE.

We have had an encouraging response to the founding of the International Synoptic Society. It is clear that readers of JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE are deeply interested in the research of the Jerusalem School and are willing to contribute so that trained scholars can more fully illuminate the words and deeds of Jesus. We are hoping that this is just the beginning, and that many more of our readers will choose to become International Synoptic Society members. Your support will be instrumental in helping us all to better understand the words of Jesus.

Annual membership in the Society is: Regular: US\$100 (or equivalent in other currency); Supporting: US\$300; Sponsor: US\$500; Patron: US\$1000. Lifetime membership is US\$5000. Members of the Society will receive a special membership certificate, and publications funded with dues will carry the names of contributing members. (Checks should be made payable to "Jerusalem Perspective." United States members can receive a tax-deductible receipt by sending their dues via

the Jerusalem School's U.S. affiliate, the Center for Judaic-Christian Studies, P.O. Box 293040, Dayton, OH 45429.)

If you would like to contribute to a particular project of the Jerusalem School or piece of equipment, please write for a list of specific needs.

Computer Equipment Fund

One project we would like to mention is the upgrading of the School's computer equipment with the new Macintosh SE30. Beth El Shaddai Study Center in Pasadena, California, directed by Dr. William Bean, is coordinating an effort to raise the money for this computer, which will help improve our desktop publishing capabilities and open the way for us to carry out more comprehensive textual analysis.

Beth El Shaddai, a non-profit corporation, is an associate of the Jerusalem School, and over the past year has purchased two Jasmine 70MB hard disks and other equipment for the School. The new computer, including Israeli customs of 60%, will cost over \$12,000. If you would like to help the School acquire this much-needed piece of equipment, please send your donations to the Jerusalem School for the Study of the Synoptic Gospels, P.O. Box 31822, Jerusalem, 91317 Israel, or to obtain a tax-deductible receipt in the United States, to Beth El Shaddai Study Center, P.O. Box 5922, Pasadena, CA 91107 (Tel. 818-796-8001). Please designate your check "For SE30." JP

John the Nazirite (continued from page 1)

they can shave their heads" — the act which signaled the completion of the nazirite vow. When Agrippa returned to Jerusalem from Rome in 41 C.E. after being reconfirmed as king by the Roman Emperor Claudius, he also "arranged for a large number of nazirites to be shaved" (*Antiquities* 19:294).

Mishnah Nazir 5:4 relates that soon after the destruction of the Temple, there were a number of nazirites from the diaspora who arrived in Jerusalem to complete their nazirite vows and found the Temple in ruins.

Duration of Vows

All of the cases cited above deal with nazirites who chose to undertake a period of consecration for a limited amount of time:

During the entire period of his vow of separation no razor may be used on his head. He must be holy until the period of his separation to the LORD is over; he must let the hair of his head grow long. (Numbers 6:5)

If no time period was specified, the term of the vow was thirty days. Rabbinic sources also refer to "a nazirite for life" (cf. Nazir 1:4), and it would seem that John the Baptist

was a permanent nazirite.

According to the Torah, it was the nazirite himself who undertook the vow: "If a man or woman explicitly utters a nazirite's vow, to set himself apart for the LORD..." (Numbers 6:2). However the Mishnah states: "A man may place his son under the nazirite's vow" (Nazir 4:6). Thus, at the angel's bidding, Zechariah could place his son John under the vow of a nazirite. According to this same passage, when the son grew up he could be released from his father's vow, or continue to serve as a nazirite, in which case all of the pertinent laws applied.

Nazirites Esteemed

In both early and late rabbinic sources one finds opinions divided as to whether the taking of nazirite vows should be encouraged. However, there is no doubt that a nazirite whose intentions were pure and who sought to consecrate himself out of love of God was held in high esteem by all.

This is reflected in one of the earliest traditions found in the Oral Torah, a story about Shim'on the Righteous who served as high priest around 200 B.C.E. Shim'on generally opposed the taking of nazirite vows,

and therefore refused to join the other priests in eating the meat of the sacrifices offered by nazirites:

Shim'on the Righteous said — I never ate meat of a nazirite's guilt offering, except in this one instance.

It happened that a certain nazirite came to me [to offer his sacrifice upon completing his term as a nazirite] from the south, and I noticed that he had beautiful eyes, was handsome and had curly locks. I said to him, "My son, why did you decide to destroy all this beautiful hair [by taking a nazirite vow]?" He told me, "I was a shepherd in my town. I went to draw water from the spring and saw my reflection in the water. My desires became so inflamed that I was nearly destroyed. I said to it [i.e., to the evil inclination], 'Evil one, you should not have tried to entice something that does not belong to you, something that is destined to become dust, worm and maggot. I must shave you [his hair] off as a consecration unto the LORD.'"

I [Shim'on the Righteous] drew his head to me, kissed him and said, "My son, may there be many like you in Israel who do the will of the LORD. In you is the fulfillment of the verse: 'If a man or woman explicitly utters a nazirite's vow, to set himself apart for the LORD...'" (Tosefta Nazir 4:7 and parallels)

Shmuel Safrai, one of the senior members of the Jerusalem School, is professor of Jewish History at the Hebrew University.